

More than 4,000 years of service - and counting

Between them they have more than 4,000 years of public service in one of the most demanding jobs in the country.

Last week ambulance staff from across the east of England gathered at Newmarket's Rowley Mile racecourse to pay tribute to those who have served patients with distinction for at least 20 years. It was the first awards evening for the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST) since its formation in July 2006 by merging the services covering Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

In total, 195 staff members received Queen's Medals (for 20 years of frontline service), 25-year long service awards or 20-year long service awards for non-frontline staff – clocking up 4,550 years of service between them.

Hayden Newton, chief executive of the EEAST, said: "This awards ceremony gives the Trust a wonderful opportunity to formally acknowledge the commitment and hard work of our staff, both on the front line and in other very important roles.

"There are some very special people who go above and beyond what is expected of them to give either exceptional patient care, ensure we maintain high levels of excellent response to both emergency and non-emergency calls, or of course volunteer for the Trust to make a difference to their communities."

The ceremony was also attended by Lord Tollemarche, Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk, and Keith Pearson, chairman of the East of England strategic health authority

Lord Tollemarche paid tribute to the "wonderful service" of staff, adding: "I'm very much aware of the pressures that you all have to go through occasionally of rude and verbal abuse and even sometimes having bricks thrown at you when you're in the line of duty. You are sometimes confronted by the most appalling scenes of devastation and carnage, broken limbs and, sometimes of course, death as well. I simply cannot understand the view that some members of the public take of the wonderful people you are."

Mr Pearson, who last year helped to drive an old ambulance to Kosovo to help provide medical aid there, told staff: "I've been out with ambulance crews over the last few years and I've seen the kinds of problems that you face on a Friday and Saturday night as pubs and clubs turn out. You make no judgements; you just carry out your work professionally."

He also praised the work of the non emergency service staff: "I've seen the hand that supports someone as they are taken in the back of the vehicle but I've also seen the hand of reassurance when someone has been in hospital for quite painful and difficult treatment for cancer."

Sixteen staff also received separate awards for outstanding work during the year in different areas of the Trust's activities.

Award winners

Essex

Gary Baines - Operational Person of the Year

Paramedic Gary Baines is based at Loughton and has worked in the service for more than 22 years. Nominations described him as an exceptional member of staff, an inspiration, and an excellent ambassador for the Trust. He has been involved in a number of initiatives within the Trust such as the air ambulance and admission avoidance schemes, working closely with the primary care trust in the Epping Forest area.

The 45-year-old from Waltham Abbey is a qualified assessor and spends a significant amount of time supporting, educating and developing new members of staff.

Gary prides himself on his clinical ability and the care and service he provides to patients, and makes a major contribution to the development of staff and the future of the service.

Gary, who lives in Waltham Abbey, said: "I'm quite embarrassed by it all really! I never knew anything about it; I had to read the email telling me I'd got it, three times because I thought it was a hoax.

“There are not many things I haven’t done in this job, but in particular I’m proud of the A&E diversion work and that I was one of the first crew on the air ambulance when flying began in 1998.

“I was born and bred in Loughton and work here, so it’s great to be part of the community. I’m not sure what the next 22 years will bring – retirement eventually I hope! – but I intend to work towards more managerial roles if and when they come up and I’m the person for the job.”

Fred Stone - Diversity Champion

Fred is an emergency care practitioner in Thurrock, and has been in the ambulance service since July 1986.

He was nominated for his efforts in championing equality and diversity for many years within the Essex locality, and it is known that he gives much of his free time to maintaining and pursuing his efforts.

Fred is described as passionate and dedicated in his beliefs and work, and in particular, he has been a consistent and essential link to the traveller and gypsy communities in Essex, ensuring the needs of the community were recognised and keeping the channels of communication open, when it can be extremely challenging.

Prior to the merger in 2006, Fred was essential to the delivery of equality and diversity awareness training. When the current equality and diversity steering group was set up in 2007, Fred was one of the first people to come forward as a diversity champion.

Brendan Saich

Chief Officer’s Commendation: Billericay and Basildon operational manager Brendan Saich, was nominated for the excellent care he gave at an emergency call at Leigh Chapel Lane in Laindon on January 7.

The female patient was the middle of a lake and clinging on to raised vegetation. Together with a police officer, Brendan made a rapid decision to get in the lake and swim towards the her. The water was icy cold and it was difficult to reach the patient and when Brendan managed to get to her, she was barely conscious. Both Brendan and the police officer managed to get her back to the embankment and despite being wet and cold themselves, continued to treat the patient and assist the attending ambulance crew.

Brendan went beyond the call of a health professional and put himself at risk in saving another life, and so is being recognised for his outstanding contribution to the Trust.

“I am collecting this award on behalf of all colleagues present on the emergency call that day,” he said. “As it was particularly cold in the water, it was my two ambulance colleagues who actually started the treatment of the patient, and therefore I feel it was very much a team effort.

“I think it is something most of my colleagues would have done - it was purely instinct. We are all trained to treat, prevent and promote and therefore jumping in to assist both the patient and my police colleague was something that was done automatically.”

Suffolk

Unsung Tony cleans up

Ambulance fleet assistant (AFA) Tony Peck was presented with the support person of the year award.

Tony, 36, works at Ipswich ambulance station where his role is to make sure that ambulance vehicles going out of the station are made ready, clean and restocked as quickly as possible.

His nomination was supported by his manager and 25 colleagues.

Tony joined the ambulance service in 2005 when, having spent more than 17 years working in the construction industry, he decided he wanted to do something completely different.

A member of St John Ambulance Service since 1985, he saw the advertisement for his current job by chance and decided to apply. His nomination refers to him as “friendly”, always willing to help” and “outstanding”.

Speaking about the award, Tony said: “I enjoy working with everybody in the station and I always try to do the best that I can. The crews deserve the best we can give them but at the end of the day the job has to be done to the best of our ability. For me that’s making sure that everything is on board and that the vehicle is ready to go. It was quite a shock to be selected - I’m just an ordinary guy but I am glad that people are pleased with what I do.”

Chris takes top controller award

Senior patient liaison assistant Chris Ringer was presented with the Patient Transport Service (PTS) controller of the year award.

Chris works in the patient transport office at the West Suffolk Hospital and was nominated for her exceptional contributions and service to the West Suffolk Patient Transport Service.

Chris's manager, Sue Eckersley, said: "Chris has worked for the Trust since 1984 and has shown exceptional professionalism, courtesy and a real 'can do' attitude which makes the West Suffolk PTS run smoothly. She is a friend to all of the staff and is never flustered by the demands of patients and their relatives, or the hospital clinics. She just takes it all in her stride, smiles and gets the job done." Speaking about her award, Chris said: "I really enjoy my job and always have done, so it was a really big surprise to win the nomination. It's just so great that that our part of the service has won some recognition."

Norfolk

Ambulance team honoured for saving baby

Sue Pateman (clinical field operations manager), Kevin Brown (paramedic) and Mike Pelling (ambulance technician), were presented with a special award from the High Sheriff of Norfolk. Sue was called to an address in Thetford, Norfolk in 2005 where a six-week old baby was had stopped breathing and was in a critical condition. A back-up ambulance crew was called and she carried out active resuscitation until they arrived. The baby was rushed to hospital in Bury St Edmunds where she was found to have two skull fractures.

Fortunately she survived, but in a case which came to court last year a parent was found guilty of cruelty. Sue and Mike, who retired this month after 30 years service, were called as witnesses for the prosecution.

In recognition of their actions, Judge Paul Downes awarded each of them £200 from public funds on the final day of the hearing at Norwich Crown Court.

Sue said: "I think we all felt that it was a stressful event but one that had a good outcome in that the child survived and has no lasting damage. We all felt that we were just doing our job but it was really nice to have our efforts recognised in this way, particularly for Mike who will end his career on a high note."

Paramedic Kevin Brown said: "We quickly realised that the baby was in a critical way; we just scooped her up and made for the vehicle, where both at the ambulance and on route to hospital we assisted the baby with ventilations to keep her breathing. It's all in day's work for us!"

Proud Penny takes award

Penny Mann, who works for the Patient Transport Service (PTS) in Norwich, was presented with the PTS Carer of the Year Award.

Penny's job revolves around picking up patients who have a hospital or treatment appointment from their homes and taking them to the place they need to go and returning them home later in the day. She is always looking for ways to make people's lives better, not just friends and colleagues but the patients and services that she comes into contact with. Penny has undertaken numerous ventures with a good cause in mind. For example, last Christmas she suggested colleagues should donate food to an animal sanctuary near Norwich instead of exchanging greetings cards. It raised a huge amount of food which the charity was very grateful for.

Many of Penny's regulars visit the renal unit at the Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital (NNUH) for treatment, and earlier this year she organised a fundraising event and invited people to turn up and join hands and circle the hospital.

"Loads of people came - patients, friends, relatives and colleagues, raising a total of £1885 for the patients' fund," said Penny.

At the moment she is organising a May Ball for friends and colleagues at a Norwich hotel. Earlier this year, she and two colleagues successfully resuscitated a man who collapsed in the café after attending a clinic at the NNUH.

On receiving the award, Penny added: "I was shocked and overwhelmed, but I couldn't do it without my crew mates to back me up so they all deserve a pat on the back too. I think my biggest

achievement was assisting in the resuscitation of a man from Wymondham who was visiting the eye clinic at the hospital. He just collapsed in the café and we were on hand to help.”

Cambridgeshire

Rose commended for accident help

Ambulance transport assistant Rose Taylor spends her days helping patients get to and from hospital for routine appointments.

But on June 12 last year, while undertaking her non emergency services duties and with a patient on board, she came across a horrific, fatal accident in Histon. And this week she was given a special commendation by the chief executive of the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS).

Rose, based at Ely ambulance station, ignored her lack of emergency care training and stopped to help.

She covered the deceased patient from the public gaze while she waited for her accident and emergency colleagues.

Rose, who joined the EEAS in 1999, was nominated for “showing immense resolve and depth of character in acting so swiftly to preserve the dignity of the young woman, while protecting the public from viewing the horrific injuries she had sustained”.

Speaking about the award, Rose said: “I was very pleased to receive the award but never expected what I did was worthy of such praise. When you drive a big white van with ambulance written on the side, the public expect you to stop and do something. I just happened to be first on the scene. Nothing can prepare you for the shock of an accident like that, but training and professionalism just kicked in and I did what I had to do until the ambulance crew turned up.”

Beds & Herts

Top award for ambulance stalwart

Long serving ambulance officer Ray Trotter has been recognised for his dedication and commitment to the East of England Ambulance Service with a special award.

Ray received the Chair's Award for his continuous expertise and knowledge to the ambulance service. A very well known figure in ambulance services throughout the country, Ray is always willing to give advice and has been inspirational throughout his 36 year career.

Trust Chair Maria Ball said: “There has been some magnificent stories of staff going that little bit further and beyond the call of their duties at this years awards ceremony, and to choose one person for this award was very difficult. Ray has gone above and beyond and leads by example, and he is very well respected by all he works alongside. I am proud to honour him with such an award. Well done Ray.”

Award for emergency dispatcher

Bedford dispatcher Ian Smith was recognised for his dedication and commitment to the health and emergency operations centre (HEOC).

Ian, who won the Dispatcher of the Year award, joined the ambulance service in November 2004 as a trainee emergency medical dispatcher and, in December 2005, was successfully promoted to dispatch coordinator.

Ian was commended for being “completely reliable” and always having the needs of patients at the forefront of his mind.

He is proactive and ensures resources are dispatched promptly and efficiently. Ian is a mine of information and is completely dedicated to the operations centre environment, always going the extra mile.

On receiving his award Ian said: “It is an honour to receive such an award and I wish to thank all the staff within the operations centre for their continuing support over the years. I am very proud of this achievement.”